

## **Library Board Minutes**

March 11, 2024

Bethlehem Area Public Library

Meeting conducted in a hybrid form of in-person and virtual attendance via Zoom.

President Jane Gill called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

ATTENDING: City of Bethlehem – Anne Felker, Jane Gill, Joyce Hinnefeld,  
G. Christopher Hunt  
Fountain Hill – Will Rufe  
Hanover Township – Telly Diacogiannis

Staff – Josh Berk, Amresse Farrow, Sonya Hennessey, Sarah Phillips,  
Erin Poore, Susan Schirripa  
Other – Terence Faul (King, Spry, Herman, Freund & Faul)

ABSENT: City of Bethlehem – Joanne Garcia, Rachel Leon, Delia Marrero  
Bethlehem Township – two open seats

### **COURTESY OF THE FLOOR:**

1. Ms. Hinnefeld wondered if Ms. Farrow's marketing report had been shared with all board members. Mr. Diacogiannis said this would be discussed more during that committee's report.
2. She also wondered about committee member names being added to the agenda. Director Berk plans to gather an updated list this evening.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Motion to approve the February minutes was made by Ms. Hinnefeld, seconded by Mr. Diacogiannis; motion approved with Ms. Felker abstaining.

### **APPROVAL OF OPERATING FUNDS:**

1. President Gill called for a motion to approve the January operating funds subject to audit. Motion to approve the January operating funds, subject to audit, made by Mr. Rufe, seconded by Mr. Diacogiannis; motion approved unanimously.

### **DIRECTOR'S ORAL REPORT:**

Director Berk reported the number of people utilizing the inside of the Main Library building has increased. Event attendance also continues to be popular. On Saturdays, the "good" problem is the need for more patron seating. We are still waiting on a few items before the first floor renovation will be considered completed. There is an open bid for soundproofing and a display case is being built for local history, interesting books, or anything the

Library wants to show. He also highlighted the upcoming Lehigh Valley Book Festival to be held on March 23. This is a partnership with PBS39, Let's Play Books, and The End: A Bookstore. Saturday's events are children and family focused. This has grown into a Lehigh Valley wide book festival over the last five years.

Ms. Farrow added that the Cohen Room is popular for a quiet study space. She also reminded the Board about the Venture X partnership that offers additional professional workspace.

Mr. Diacogiannis asked for an update on the Bookmobile. Director Berk shared that the previous vehicle has been totaled by the insurance company. The Library will have \$30,000 from insurance to put towards a replacement. The insurance company also towed the old vehicle away. Estimates for a replacement are in the range of \$300,000 to \$600,000. There are many potential business sponsors the Library will approach, for example, Mack Trucks and Lehigh Valley Hospital Network Children's Hospital. He shared that the dream option would be electrically powered or something very environmentally friendly. Have not found anything specific yet, but options are being researched.

Ms. Farrow began sharing the story of the Bookmobile's retirement on social media. Multiple community groups reached out for details of how they could help. A more detailed replacement plan will be beneficial in accepting those offers of help. Mr. Rufe asked if the Library will also be requesting donations from individuals. He also had recommendations for some larger donors and will share some contacts directly with Director Berk and Ms. Farrow.

Another board question was about making sure a financial discussion occurs with the City of Bethlehem this year before that budget is set. Director Berk has letters prepared. He will send those out soon, instead of waiting for June, in case budget talks happen earlier than expected.

## **COMMUNITY REPORTS:**

1. City of Bethlehem – none
2. Bethlehem Township – President Gill asked if there was any update after last month's discussion of attending a Township meeting to inquire about board representatives. Ms. Felker would like to attend a meeting, along with Mr. Diacogiannis, to encourage the Township's participation on the Library Board. Solicitor Faul explained, so that Board members could make an informed decision, that the longer the Township does not act helps BAPL with regards to the lawsuit. Board discussion included: Wanting to continue a positive relationship with Bethlehem Township, encouraging Township residents who are Library supporters to speak at Township meetings, understanding the past story of the existing lawsuit from Bethlehem Township and Hanover Township, and how this could affect the Library's legal standing.

Ms. Felker moved to have Board members formally invite Bethlehem Township to appoint representatives who support BAPL. The motion passed with 4 votes and 1 opposed; Mr. Diacogiannis, Ms. Felker, President Gill, and Mr. Rufe voting in favor and Dr. Hunt voting against.

3. Fountain Hill – Mr. Rufe reported some cloudLibrary users are still experiencing usage issues with library eBooks. Patrons have uninstalled and then reinstalled the app, but continue to have problems. He also shared that their new Borough Manager, Amy Burkhart, has been discussing more library activities with Director Berk to occur in Fountain Hill and on the Southside of Bethlehem. Director Berk added there have been brainstorming sessions for events, book clubs, yoga, and other topics of interest.
4. Hanover Township – none

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee – Dr. Hunt reminded Board members about survey data shared with them.

Dr. Hunt chairs this committee; other members include: Ms. Marrero, Randi Blauth, Ms. Farrow, and Director Berk.

Ms. Farrow added that some Black History Month events have now been rescheduled due to inclement weather in February. Also, Director Berk and Dr. Hunt will be speaking on a panel this Saturday about censorship, content, and information. The panel will be looking at addressing issues in the “public sphere.”

2. Finance Committee – No report, but Director Berk needs Mr. Rufe’s signature.

Mr. Rufe chairs this committee; other members include: President Gill, Director Berk, and Elissa Wurf.

3. Governance Committee – No report.

Ms. Felker chairs this committee; other members include Ms. Hinnefeld and Mr. Rufe.

4. Human Resources Committee – No report.

Ms. Marrero chairs this committee and the other member is Mr. Rufe.

5. Marketing and Advocacy Committee – Mr. Diacogiannis reported that their meeting was postponed due to weather. Ms. Farrow's Marketing Plan report will be shared with Board members. It focuses on past, present, and future goals. Ms. Farrow gave a brief preview.

Mr. Diacogiannis chairs this committee; other members include: Ms. Farrow, Regina Kochmaruk, Director Berk, Edana Hoy, Ms. Blauth, Angela Baio, Shirley Delusio, and Sarah Wascura.

6. Strategic Planning Committee – No report from Mr. Rufe.

Mr. Rufe chairs this committee; other members include: Ms. Poore, Director Berk, and Ms. Blauth.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

None

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Director Berk described how there is an area of concrete that has cracked near the South Side Branch. Now water is coming through that crack and into the building causing damage. The question before the Board is who will be responsible for fixing the concrete area. Solicitor Faul said a title search to determine the property line would cost a few hundred dollars. He also recommends hiring a contractor to seal that side of the building. Board discussion was brief.

President Gill made a motion to direct Solicitor Faul to complete a title search to determine the exact property line of the South Side Branch. Dr. Hunt seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Rufe. President Gill adjourned the meeting at 7:18 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Phillips (BAPL Staff) and Delia Marrero (Secretary)